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OLC 72-0805

14 July 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Discussion with Ed Braswell re Laos Ceiling

25X1 1. This afternoon, [] OPPB, and I discussed the above
25X1 matter with Ed Braswell, Chief Counsel, Senate Armed Services Committee.
We said we were confused as to the basis of the decision to cut the []
[] We said that such a cut might
well seriously impair the entire U.S. program in Laos for FY 1973. In
responding, Braswell made the following points:

25X1 a. The Committee has reported out the Defense Procurement
Authorization bill with [] Symington ceiling for Laos.

b. This figure was proposed by Senator Symington and
accepted by the Committee with the full understanding that it
was to cover all Laos war-related expenditures including both
military and economic aid, i.e., the [] was substituted
for the original request [] proposed by the Adminis-
tration.

c. Braswell confided that the Committee's problem was that
nobody in the Administration seemed able or willing to speak up
clearly on the importance of a higher ceiling. He also complained
that the Defense Department had not been candid with the Committee.
in presenting its figures.

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d. In these circumstances, Braswell saw no hope that anyone in the Committee would be willing to reopen the matter on the floor and push for a higher ceiling. He did comment, however, that if we wanted to pursue this possibility the place to start would be to try to persuade Symington himself to reconsider and accept a higher ceiling.

e. When asked the possibility of getting the ceiling raised in conference, Braswell said he couldn't predict anything in this regard.

f. Braswell repeated several times that the real problem was that there was "no one in charge" of the Laos problem--DOD doesn't seem particularly interested and the State Department has been ambivalent. On another occasion he commented that "the Administration is hiding" on Laos.

g. Braswell voiced the personal opinion that the Administration could "live with" the [] ceiling since its earlier requests had been inflated.

2. In conclusion, Braswell said that the only other course open to us was to try to get the White House to make a strong pitch to the Congress.

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